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**“ME AND MUM”:
New Zealand Adolescent Daughters’ Stories
of their Relationships with their Mothers**

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent daughters' perceptions of their relationship with their mothers were examined using a social constructionist approach, which identified two conflicting discourses regarding adolescence and the parent-adolescent relationship. The recent academic discourse emphasises the continuing importance of strong bonds between parents and adolescents, particularly between mothers and daughters. The popular culture discourse emphasises separation from and conflict with parents in adolescence, particularly between mothers and daughters. Ten adolescent girls aged between 15 and 17 were interviewed using the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: George, Kaplan & Main, 1996) to investigate which of these discourses they subscribed to. A narrative approach was used to identify individual relationship themes and cross-narrative themes of agency and communion. These themes were very similar to those found in other comparable research, both national and international. New findings included the influence of the following contexts upon daughters' perceptions: their childhood relationship with their mother, significant events in their lives, their childhood and current relationship with their father, and cognitive maturation. Two groups of five were identified within the ten participants, distinguished by their ability to reflect on their relationship, their perception of their mother, and the amount of reciprocity in their relationship. Overall, the emphasis on mothers' continuing support and availability in daughters' narratives challenged popular culture's emphasis on separation and conflict in parent-adolescent relationships, particularly between mothers and daughters.

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